



**Exclusive:**

## GODFREY TALKS

- 1.** *Rich. In pain. Why doesn't he quit?*
- 2.** *His near-fatal hip operation.*
- 3.** *Why he fears more surgery.*
- 4.** *What is his secret for TV success?*
- 5.** *His views on Godfrey vs. Disney.*
- 6.** *How he feels about Julius La Rosa.*

**By Bob Stahl**

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Arthur Godfrey's last hip operation nearly killed him. "During the first 24 hours," he now admits for the first time, "they almost lost me."

When you see him on television, walking without crutches, he is suffering agonizing pain. Another operation might help—but it's a life-and-death gamble. He dreads making a decision to take the chance.

Add to that mental—and physical—torture the fact that he's been the target of harsh newspaper stories. Because he is in the public eye, his methods and motives have been questioned.

The new *Disneyland* show is offering his toughest competition yet. Godfrey is no longer king of the airwaves on Wednesdays. His ratings have dropped noticeably.

He's a millionaire. He could retire

tomorrow, rest his body, live more than comfortably the rest of his life.

So why doesn't he quit?

Godfrey himself supplied the answer to this and other questions in this exclusive interview, one of the few granted since Julius La Rosa was fired in October, 1953.

He talked continuously, for almost two hours, in his New York office, taking time out only to sip tea and, more frequently, to relight a cigar.

Why doesn't he quit? Basically, he said, to keep from becoming depressed because of his hip—and out of loyalty to the "Friends" of Arthur Godfrey and His Friends.

Godfrey went on to discuss various subjects, pulling no punches, speaking his mind.

He admits that his hip is a constant source of discomfort. During a recent



program, he seemed only half-kidding when he talked about two little yellow lights technicians had rigged on his desk "to give him better coloring." Actually, though his crutches lay within easy reach as he spoke, he looked healthy and relaxed.

He discounted reports that he is having a running battle with his doctors over the need for a second operation, but listed some reasons why he's far from enthusiastic.

"My hip joint, mechanically, is no good," he said, "and one day I'll have to have the operation done again. I can do everything now but walk. I ride as well as I ever did, I swim a lot, and I'm trying to learn to ice-skate again. My reflexes are as good as ever when I fly. But if I got up from this chair and tried to walk across the room without my crutches, the pain would be almost unbearable.

"But before having them do the operation again, I want to wait a while. I want to wait until the doctors learn a little more about this thing called shock." (Shock, which often follows injury or prolonged surgery, is a serious depression of all the vital processes of the body.)

"I might go into a state of shock," he said, "and never come out of it. Or I might come out of it with only half a brain, or with my liver shot.

"It only happens when the doctors have to relax you 'way down deep. That's necessary for my operation because they have to re-set the hip joint. If they find when I'm on the operating table that one nerve or muscle is still not relaxed, they have to take me down deeper.

"I haven't told this to many people, but in that first operation, for the first 24 hours, they almost lost me during that shock period.

"This operation is quite a deal, as long as there is that danger of shock.



Arthur Godfrey and his friends:

I'm not afraid of surgery. God knows, I've had as much as anybody. The only fear I have in the whole world is being a helpless invalid. I have to decide whether I should stay on these crutches or gamble again.

"Right now, mentally, I can only look down. I know my hip won't get better by itself, so I can't look up."

Keeping busy keeps his mind off his infirmity, said Godfrey. But why does he work quite so hard? "Because it's my life.

"Actually," he continued, "it's only the Wednesday night show that knocks me out. I do that show very foolishly as far as my personal life is concerned. As for personal income, you can write that off in a hurry. Often the things we do cost more than we get for the show, and I have to make up the rest.

"I continue the Wednesday night show mostly for the kids in the cast. Human nature is a funny thing. When



It's to please them, says Godfrey, that he keeps on with nighttime show.

the kids were doing only the daily morning program, they thought, 'This is the end—it's the high point of any career.' But for some reason, the columnists and newspaper people bypass our morning show.

"In order to give the kids that very questionable feeling of importance they get from seeing their names in the papers, we put on the Wednesday night show. You can call it loyalty if you like. I do it for the kids. They think it's more 'show business.' They work in a big theater with lights, costumes and backdrops."

Although the new Disneyland has taken a sizable bite out of his Wednesday night audience—the two hour-long shows are in direct competition for half an hour—Godfrey denies he's concerned, and says he's contemplating no format changes.

Recent American Research Bureau figures show Disney leading Godfrey by about five rating points—36.1 to

30.5, enough to topple Arthur Godfrey and His Friends from its usual perch among the Top Ten to 18th place.

Nevertheless, Godfrey insisted, "We have no specific changes in mind for the show," adding, "I'm only waiting for this leg to get better so I can do more visual things (swimming, ice-skating, etc.)."

He welcomes rather than fears competition, he said. "Frankly, I think competition is good for all of us. It will tend to make both our shows better.

"The only reason I'm sorry Disney is on at the same time," Godfrey said with a grin, "is because I can't see his show myself."

Next week Godfrey tells why La Rosa will never again be numbered among his "Friends," points to mistakes TV is making, and worries about losing his own "common touch."



A scientist and her assistant are both in love with the head physician.

### 25 OUR MISS BROOKS—Comedy

Mr. Conklin is under the mistaken impression that Connie Brooks is to be promoted to his job. Eve Arden. (Film)

### 27 LIBERACE—Music

### 9:00 2 OZZIE & HARRIET—Film

For synopsis see Friday listing, 7:00 P.M.

### 4 11 33 BOXING—J. Powers

Carmen Basilio, welterweight, Syracuse, N. Y., vs. Peter Mueller, middleweight, Germany 10 rounds. Jimmy Powers reports from Syracuse, N. Y.

#### TV GUIDE RATINGS

Rating	Bouts	Won	Lost	Drew	KO's
Basilio	1	61	43	11	7
Mueller	None	80	58	10	12
Basilio has not lost a bout since a close split decision to Kid Gavilan in 1953. Mueller should be an easy target.					

Compiled by Nat Fleischer (The Ring)

### 12 CHANCE OF A LIFETIME

### 21 READINGS FROM HAMLET

### 25 27 LINEUP—Film Drama

A restaurant is robbed and the manager is found tied up. Matt Grebb and Ben Guthrie take over the case. Tom Tully.

### 9:30 2 TRIANGLE THEATER—Film

Richard Carlson creates the actual adventures of Herbert Philbrick, businessman and FBI counterspy with the Communists.

### 12 DOWN YOU GO—Panel

Bergen Evans gives the clue to panelists Phil Rizzuto, Boris Karloff and Signe Hasso.

### 25 27 PERSON TO PERSON

Ed Murrow is a guest at the New York homes of Patrice Munsel and John Mason Brown on tonight's show.

### 9:45 4 YESTERDAY'S NEWSREEL

### 11 33 SPORTS FILMS—Kiernan

### 9:50 19 NEWS AND WEATHER

### 10:00 2 11 WEATHER AND NEWS

### 4 WEATHERMAN—Bill Carlsen

### 12 NEWS—SPORTS—WEATHER

### 19 MOVIE—Mystery

Million Dollar Movie: "Trade Winds." A detective sets out to capture a fugitive-from-justice. Joan Bennett, Frederic March.

### 25 SPORTS—NEWS—WEATHER

### 27 WEATHER—SPORTS—NEWS

### 33 NEWS AND WEATHER

### 10:05 4 CALL THE PLAY—Allen

### 10:15 11 MOVIE—Drama

Feature Film: "Lost Continent." A group of searchers land in an island-jungle and come upon a lost continent. Cesar Romero.

### 12 27 MOVIE—To Be Announced

### 25 ROSS ON SPORTS

### 33 SPORTALK—Landman

### 10:20 2 SPORTS—Bud Witte

### 4 LOOK AT THE NEWS

### 10:30 2 FOUR STAR PLAYHOUSE

David Niven stars in "Breakfast in Bed." For synopsis see Thursday, 8:30 P.M.

### 4 ELLERY QUEEN—Mystery

Ellery has three suspects from which to select the murderer of a young girl. (Film)

### 25 MOVIE—Comedy

Gold Medal Movie: "Under New Management." A chimneysweeper inherits a hotel from a rich uncle. Norman Evans stars.

### 33 MOVIE—Mystery

Star Theater: "Wife Wanted." Murder and blackmail are the off-shots of a lonely-hearts racket. Kay Francis, Robert Shayne.

### 11:00 2 MOVIE—Drama

Feature Theater: "Paradise Express." The niece of an old railroad man falls for a man battling a trucking service run by racketeers. Grant Withers is the star.

### 4 Tonight—Steve Allen

Steve listens to the sultry songs of nightclub chanteuse Portia Nelson.

### 11:45 12 MOVIE—Drama

Nighthawk Theater: "Tango." Tale of a night-club dancer's troubled romance.

### 25 News Headlines

### 12:00 4 News Headlines

### 12:05 4 MOVIE—Drama

Movies at Midnight: "Diplomatic Passport." A premiere showing with Marsha Hunt and Don Taylor in the title roles.

### 1:00 12 Capsule News

Stations reserve the right to make last minute changes.

## Godfrey Talks:

'TV Repeats Radio's Mistakes.'

'Am I Losing The Common Touch?'

'No Place For La Rosa.'

By Bob Stahl

Copyright, 1955, Triangle Publications, Inc.

Arthur Godfrey is plagued by constant physical pain, newspaper needling and the competition of *Disneyland*. But what he's worried about these days—because of the barrier his TV fame creates between himself and "the true reactions of people"

—is the prospect of losing "the common touch."

To Godfrey, as a performer, that means intimacy and an ability to keep "growing on people," qualities he demands from his TV cast. Julius La Rosa no longer met the Godfrey



Last of Two Parts





Man at the wheel: Godfrey calls all shots.

standard when he became "the type of singer you see in pictures, in vaudeville and in night clubs."

A man of emphatic opinions, Godfrey has decided views on what programs and people make effective living-room entertainment. These views were strengthened by what he saw on television while convalescing from his near-fatal hip operation.

"Despite the lessons we learned in radio," he told TV GUIDE in an exclusive interview, "b'gosh, we're doing the same things in TV.

"I believe, and I have gambled my career on this, that radio is a very intimate thing.

"When I was in the hospital for the first time 23 years ago (after the auto accident that caused his present hip trouble) I discovered that the way to arrest the listener's attention was to talk to him and to nobody else. Too many other shows never really got down and talked to the guy who buys.

"My shows probably drive show-business people crazy because they can't figure out what I'm trying to do. I produce and direct my shows. I call

every camera shot—and they're all close-ups. Those spectacular things with 30 or 40 people on the screen at one time—they're fine for the people in the studio audience. But the people at home say, 'What is it?'"

Godfrey characterizes his morning show as "just a soap opera." "People watch it for the same reason—because they're curious about other people.

"I force my people to be themselves because they never know what I'm going to throw at them. I try to catch them unawares, because that shows them at their best.

"Take Lu Ann Simms, for example. I start her talking about the new headboard she bought for her bed. Even the people who think that kind of stuff is stupid are fascinated by it. On Wednesday nights the kids concentrate on the fact that now they're on Broadway. I think the Wednesday show would be twice as good if they'd just try to be themselves more."

His *Friends*, said Godfrey, are picked because of their ability to "be themselves." "In choosing folks," he said, "I look for the ones who will grow on people—and get rid of them when they stop growing on people.

"I've found that the people at home appraise you. Either you grow on them or you deteriorate. You have to stand making their acquaintance. To do this, you need personality and charm. You can acquire those only through self-discipline and education. That's why I ask the kids to read and go to the theater."

La Rosa apparently was one Godfreyite who did not cotton to this set of rules. After his on-the-air dismissal, he made snide comments about compulsory dancing lessons.

Godfrey emphatically denies recurring rumors that La Rosa may rejoin him, on either a permanent or a guest

basis. Their split came about, Godfrey indicated, primarily because La Rosa began to use gestures and vocal inflections that were not natural.

"When a person reaches the La Rosa stage," he said, "there is no place for him on our stage any more. It wouldn't be fair to tie him down. There are two ways you can do this thing—either stay with us and take advantage of chances to do outside work, or go out on your own. All the kids are under contract to me, but they can cancel whenever they're unhappy or want to go elsewhere.

"La Rosa, I think, has become the type of singer you see in pictures, in vaudeville and in night clubs. They might do great work, but they aren't worth a hoot on a show like ours.

"We have a man in our organization, Larry Puck, who gets our kids the best possible deals—and there are no agent's fees. Anybody working for me has my lawyer, too, for free.

"Everybody bawled me out because they said I fired La Rosa on the air. But nobody bawled me out when I hired him on the air. I didn't fire La Rosa. I played right into his hands by releasing him from a contract that he found odious."

Godfrey feels a personal responsibility to his viewers. He wants them to share his own enthusiasms. "When I discovered how much fun it is to ice-skate," he said, "I got so crazy enthusiastic that I had to go scream about it. I'm trying now to learn to ice-skate on my one good leg because I want to do another ice show. I get a lift out of convincing other people

to try things like archery and biking."

He has also devoted considerable air time to discussing racial tolerance, the need for a strong Air Force and other matters close to his heart. Several weeks ago, just after Senator McCarthy's open breach with the President, he pointedly expressed his admiration for Mr. Eisenhower.

When he was solely a radio favorite, Godfrey was able to mingle with the public, getting first-hand information on their likes and dislikes. That is no longer possible, because TV has made him immediately recognizable.

"I don't know how to compensate for that," he said. "The worst part is that it robs you of the true reactions of people. Now all I have to go on is my memory of people.

"I'm worried about losing the common touch. I watch my mail a great deal more to see what the audience writes me about, and I watch the morning audience, the only audience I can really see."

Whatever the results of these observations, one thing is certain. Once Arthur Godfrey has made up his mind what's called for, it will be done—despite all obstacles.



Godfrey & gang: before La Rosa (left of Godfrey) changed his ways.